

**SPECIAL JOINT MEETING
BETWEEN
ROCKY MOUNT TOWN COUNCIL
AND
ROCKY MOUNT PLANNING COMMISSION
SEPTEMBER 15, 2008
6:00 P.M.**

The Rocky Mount Town Council held a special joint meeting with the Rocky Mount Planning Commission at the Community & Hospitality Center (Depot) located at 52 Franklin Street, Rocky Mount, Virginia at 6:00 p.m., with Mayor Steven C. Angle presiding on behalf of the Rocky Mount Town Council, and Chair Janet Stockton presiding on behalf of the Rocky Mount Planning Commission.

The following members were present on behalf of the Rocky Mount Town Council:

Mayor Steven C. Angle, Vice Mayor Posey W. Dillon and Council Members Jerry W. Greer, Sr., John H. Lester, Roger M. Seale, Robert W. Strickler, Gregory B. Walker, and all other staff as noted in the minutes.

The Rocky Mount Town Council was called to order by Mayor Angle.

Let the record show that no roll call was taken, but for the record, the following were present on behalf of Town Council: All members of Town Council as noted, Town Manager C. James Ervin, Assistant Town Manager/Community Development Director Matthew C. Hankins, Town Attorney John T. Boitnott, Planning & Zoning Administrator Paul D. Stockwell, and Town Clerk Patricia H. Keatts.

The following members were present on behalf of the Rocky Mount Planning Commission:

Chair Janet Stockton, Vice Chair John Speidel, and Planning Commission Members Milton Arrington, Ina Clements, Derwin Hall, Jerry Greer, and all other staff as noted in the minutes.

Let the record show that Planning Commission Member John Tiggle was absent.

The Planning Commission was called to order by Chair Stockton.

Let the record show that no roll call was taken, but for the record, the following were present on behalf of the Planning Commission: All members of Planning Commission as noted, Assistant Town Manager/Community Development Director Matthew C. Hankins, Town Attorney John T. Boitnott, Planning & Zoning Administrator Paul D. Stockwell, and Deputy Clerk Stacey B. Sink.

APPROVAL OF AGENDA

Motion was made by Planning Commission Member Clements to approve the agenda as presented, seconded by Council Member Lester and carried unanimously.

REPORT ON PLANNING COMMISSION STRATEGIC PLANNING RETREAT HELD AUGUST 14, 2008

A. Discussion of Town Council's View of Planning Commission's Role

A report was given by the Assistant Town Manager/Community Development Director, who stated the retreat lasted about three hours. Following is a brief overview of the meeting that was discussed:

- Communication between Planning Commission and Council:
 - Planning Commission would like to have better communication from Council, rather than reading about Council's decisions in the newspaper.
- Subdivision improvement requirements:
 - Get a lot of requests for waivers for subdivisions. Probably lacking in some of the things that should be required (i.e., lighting).
 - Need clarification so Planning Commission doesn't have to bring a lot before Council.
 - Seen some improvements in parking.
 - People continuing to use Franklin Heights Subdivision as a "cut through" to Rt. 40 or St. Rt. 220.

B. Open Discussion Regarding Communication Mechanism Between Town Council and Planning Commission

The Town Manager stated that he would like to see open discussion between Council and the Planning Commission regarding what the Planning Commission role is, whether they are a legislative body that hears appeals, requests, etc., or a proactive body that seeks positive change.

Chair Stockton requested Planning Commission Member Hall to address this, as he had brought it up initially during the strategic retreat.

Planning Commission Hall stated that sometimes the Planning Commission gets things back through the media and they are not sure if they are on the same wave length as Council. He also stated that sometimes the Planning Commission gets proposals from staff and they are not sure if there is a buy-in from Council on what staff is proposing.

There was discussion regarding sidewalks, curb and guttering, and how Virginia Department of Transportation funding played into this for new construction versus maintenance funding the Town receives. It was determined that Council and the Planning Commission would have to determine which areas of the Town need sidewalks and curb and guttering, determine if this qualifies for a long-range project, then address the matter in the Five-year Capital Improvement Plan to see if it is economically feasible.

The Mayor stated that instead of talking specifics, there is a greater need to talk about communication. He further stated that after a Council meeting takes place which involved an item that had previously come before the Planning Commission, staff needs to put something in place, notifying Planning Commission members of Council decisions and why items for public hearing were approved or not. By doing this, the Planning Commission can know before it hits the newspaper why Council passed or denied a request, or had a request for the Planning Commission to look into. It was the consensus of the Planning Commission members that this would help them to be able to understand why a decision was made by Council.

There was discussion that conducting joint meetings such as this helps open up the line of communication between Council and the Planning Commission.

There was also discussion about people appearing before the Planning Commission to present their concerns with one presentation, then when they appear before Council, their presentation could have changed somewhat, with Council hearing something entirely different from the Planning Commission, which can affect the way Council votes on a matter. There was discussion that sometimes Council hears proffers that the Planning Commission does not, which also affects the outcome of Council's decision.

The Planning Commission members were in consensus on the following:

- Not sure why Council wants certain items in the ordinance changed.
- Sometimes things come up before Council regarding needed changes, with Council sending it before the Planning Commission to study.
- Wants to make sure items brought before them by staff are exactly what Council wants.
- Don't always know why something is being brought before them to be reviewed by Council.
- Wonder why the Planning Commission has to cover things several times, once it has been reviewed in detail and worked out to the best of their ability to be able to accommodate the Town and its citizens.
 - The Mayor stated that this could be something being sent to the Planning Commission by staff at the request of Council that needed further review.
 - Also, when management changes and Council changes, sometimes items are

- sent back for further review or a clarification, as objectives change.
- Thinks the sign ordinance has been reviewed more than enough.

Discussed that regularly scheduled joint sessions between Council and the Planning Commission may need to take place when such changes are sent back to the Planning Commission for review, so the Planning Commission and Council can be on the same page. Also mentioned that the Planning & Zoning Ordinance is far from perfect and if there is a real push for something needing to be changed, staff can consult with Council as a whole body first before taking it before the Planning Commission. This way, the Planning Commission gets definitive direction from Council, which helps the Planning Commission with the outcome for goals.

Discussed that the Board of Zoning Appeals hears variances, and that the Planning Commission is looked to from time to time to make changes to the ordinance itself, with the Board of Zoning Appeals being a separate body all by itself. The Board of Zoning Appeals, from time to time, requests that items they see on a continued basis be looked into to see if the Planning & Zoning Ordinance needs to be changed.

The Town Manager stated he believes he has the mechanism to go before Council for specific requests before the Planning Commission.

The Mayor emphasized the importance of staff getting information to the Planning Commission once Council hears the request.

Council informed the Planning Commission that they are empowered to make their own decision.

DISCUSSION REGARDING TRANSPORTATION

A. Overview on Central Business District (CBD) Parking by Town Manager and Assistant Town Manager/Community Development Director

The Town Manager stated that Council has basically asked him to look into attracting and promoting businesses for downtown, with the following points being made:

- There is a parking lot built, which cannot be considered when determining minimum parking requirements.
- Need to evaluate changes made.
- What is needed for parking in downtown?

The Planning & Zoning Administrator stated that the Planning Commission has recommended for public hearing to use a special exception for CBD parking, with the request going before the Planning Commission first, then to Council for minimal

parking requirements for the CBD parking.

The Assistant Town Manger went over how the parking currently works. He stated that if there is a need that goes beyond the code, it can come before the Planning Commission as a special exception.

There was discussion regarding the idea of the Planning Commission hearing these types of requests as a special exception as a good idea; however human nature must be considered, as people do not want to walk that far away from their vehicle to a business they need to go to.

Discussed the need to start looking into off-street parking.

Maynor Street was mentioned for parking potential along that street and for the businesses located in that area.

The Planning Commission stated they didn't have any real problems with the CBD district itself, but going out from that area became a problem for parking. Discussed the need to look into tying-in with the uptown grant the creation of a certain number of parking spaces, with the Assistant Town Manager confirming 19 parking spots along Bank Street are already in the plans.

The Town Manager stated that he believes the Planning Commission seems to be satisfied with the special exceptions to handle parking, with those requests ultimately coming before Council. He further stated that he believes this is a good compromise to help with a particular business asking for parking as a special exception and he believes this will work.

Parking signs throughout the Town were discussed, with the Assistant Town Manager confirming that the Planning & Zoning Administrator and GIS Technician are currently working on the placement of signs. The Planning & Zoning Administrator confirmed that they are working on setting up sign designs and ordering, and will have the Public Works Director have them installed around Town. He further commented that the Chief of Police has helped them mark all the spots where public parking will go. The Town Manager informed everyone that VDOT had cut the funding for directional and way-finding signs, and now he is trying to do this in-house as the Town has good staff to do this, with it being nothing fancy.

It was discussed that parking signs for the Town were discussed about four to five years ago. Council Member Greer asked that the Planning & Zoning Administrator look into this.

The Assistant Town Manager confirmed to Council that prior to the signs being installed, a sample would be brought before Council during their October regular Council meeting to give them an idea of what the signs will look like, with him

wanting them installed by the end of October.

B. Potential Bus Service From Rocky Mount to Roanoke for Commuters

The Town Manager stated that with gas prices rising so dramatically and in talking with Council, several things can be done regarding this, being: (1) started conversations with VDOT to expand the commuter lot; and (2) went to the Franklin County Administrator (Richard Huff) to arrange a meeting with Valley Metro, a bus service that operates out of Roanoke, Virginia. Valley Metro submitted generic proposals, at a total cost of approximately \$75,000 to \$100,000 per year, depending on how many rides Council would be willing to underwrite.

Discussion ensued on how much a bus service would help not only those in Franklin County and the Town working in Rocky Mount, but also assist greatly with those living in the Roanoke area being able to commute to Franklin County or the Town that are employed in the area. The Town Manager stated that staff will be doing some type of survey to see what the ridership would be, and once surveys are gathered and the dollar figure is hammered out, he and Mr. Huff will need a gauge from Council and the Board of Supervisors to see if this is worth pursuing. The Town Manager stated he will proceed based on the consensus of those present.

Questions arose about how well the Ferrum Express bus service is doing, with the Town Manager stating that he is supposed to be receiving quarterly reports from them.

C. Overview on Pedestrian & Bicycle Access and Trail Development

The Assistant Town Manager stated that Council Member Lester had asked staff to examine pedestrian and bicycle access, and trail development amenities for uptown/downtown since the Town is having new construction. He further stated that VDOT will have to examine this also. He also stated that he will need Council's general guidance on proceeding with this.

Council Member Lester stated he would like to see the Planning Commission look into this as it deals with road width changes and right-of-ways. There was discussion on how much right-of-way would be needed for a bicycle lane, and for sidewalks. The Planning & Zoning Administrator relayed what subdivisions require regarding this matter regarding having to add bicycle lanes, and also what VDOT required.

DISCUSSION REGARDING SUBDIVISION ORDINANCE

A. Clarification of Running Water and Sewer to Property Line

The Town Manager informed those present that the Town Attorney advises that no

discussion could be held at this time regarding this matter because the Town is under litigation regarding this matter.

OTHER ITEMS DISCUSSED

1. Discussed how often the Town's Comprehensive Plan was updated, and the need to meet more often in order to update smaller items, which would help the Comprehensive Plan by being updated on a regular basis, versus having to re-write it all at one time. It was mentioned also by the Planning & Zoning Administrator that the Comprehensive Plan drives the Planning & Zoning Ordinance.
2. The Assistant Town Manager confirmed that the GIS Technician is currently updating sewer and water lines; plus, he will be getting down in the trenches during the uptown revitalization project to make sure everything is up-to-date.
3. There was a brief discussion regarding the color coding of the fire hydrants. Vice Mayor Dillon went over the history of this, and how the flow testing is being done now. The Town Manager requested Vice Chair Dillon to wait until Bald Knob tank is brought back on-line, and if the river is up, do the flow testing at that time.

SUMMARY

In summarization, the Mayor stated the following:

- Would like to see Council and the Planning Commission meet jointly sometime after January, and to continue these meetings on a quarterly basis. He further stated that when the two groups meet, it helps improve communications.
- Have the Planning Department staff give reports to the Planning Commission right after Council meetings, or the Planning Commission members could also call one of the Council members or the Town Manager.

Planning Commission Member Clements stated the following:

- Always tries to make it to the regular Council monthly meetings so she can hear the public hearings coming before Council that the Planning Commission had heard the week before.
- Believes Council did the right thing during their September 8 Council meeting in their decision regarding not applying for the grant. Thinks in some places the trail would be good, but not in "my backyard". She also stated that what the Town did for downtown was wonderful and did not want that taken away, and hopes that the uptown project will be as good.

ADJOURNMENT

At 7:07 p.m., motion was made by Vice Mayor Dillon to adjourn on behalf of the Rocky Mount Town Council, seconded by Council Member Walker and carried unanimously.

Steven C. Angle, Mayor
Rocky Mount Town Council

ATTEST:

Patricia H. Keatts, Town Clerk

/phk

At 7:07 p.m., motion was made by Planning Commission Member Clements to adjourn, seconded by Vice Chair Speidel and carried unanimously.

Janet Stockton, Chair
Rocky Mount Planning Commission

ATTEST:

Stacey B. Sink, Deputy Clerk

/sbs